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AUTHOR Storbeck, Claudine
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ABSTRACT

In-depth interviews were conducted with 23 deaf adults (ages 17 to 56) who had been educated in South Africa, to determine their impressions about the education system there. Ten of those interviewed had moved to the U.S. while the remaining 13 were still living in South Africa . The interviews were administered in sign language, with video recordings made of all interviews. Qualitative analysis of the interviews indicated that the subjects were generally unhappy with their education, expressing both feelings of resentment and anger as well as helplessness and hopelessness. Results suggest the need to change present requirements for teachers of the deaf in South Africa so that such teachers all have specialized training which is not now required. The importance of such training, including sign language, is stressed. (Contains 19 references.) (DB)

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DEAF ADULTS' EMIC VIEWS ON DEAF EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA: LOOKING BACK TO IMPROVE THE FUTURE

Claudine Storbeck

Rand Afrikaans University

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Correspondence to:

Claudine Storbeck

St Vincent School

Private Bag X15

Saxonwold, 2132

South Africa

EC 305514

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Deaf Adults' emic views on Deaf Education in South Africa: Looking back to improve the future.

Claudine Storbeck
Rand Afrikaans University, South Africa

ABSTRACT The purpose of the study was to learn about Deaf education in South Africa through the emic views of Deaf adults who had been educated through the Deaf education system in South Africa. The data were collected through in-depth, open ended interviews with 23 Deaf adults. From the data collected Deaf adults appear to be generally unhappy with their education, expressing both feelings of resentment and anger as well as helplessness and hopelessness. It is suggested in this study that a closer look be taken at the present state of Deaf education in South Africa to understand the strong views held by the Deaf recipients, in order to start working towards change. It is further recommended that training for teachers of the Deaf be considered for future teachers of the Deaf in South Africa.

Introduction

In South Africa the "history of Deaf education has been one of imbalances, unfair discrimination and oppression. The time is ripe for policies which consider the culture, language and educational rights of the Deaf, in line with the fundamental rights to education and training as stated in the White Paper on Education and Training. **Drastic measures are needed to empower the Deaf and to start eliminating the backlog that exists. Naturally this will be a long process but the time to begin is now**", (Proposed policy document, DEAFSA, October 1994). Statements such as this have been made on various occasions, however no changes occur in Deaf education and thus the feelings of anger and hopelessness of the Deaf community continue.

Due to the inept quality of deaf education in South Africa, deaf school leavers are faced with very limited job opportunities, or they are compelled to leave South Africa in search of more amiable environments. The rationale for the inquiry was thus Deaf Adults' general despondence towards Deaf education in South Africa and the apparent lack of corrective action, e.g. no teacher training programs for teachers of the Deaf in South Africa.

Teachers of the Deaf in South Africa are presently not required to have specialised teacher training in order to teach the Deaf. Teachers enter schools for the Deaf (there are 35), unaware of issues such as Deaf Culture, Sign Language, Cognitive and Language Development of the Deaf, etc., and go through a process of "learning-as-they-go-along". Further, these teachers are not required to learn Sign Language and inevitably experience communication difficulties when confronted with the task of teaching a class of Deaf students. It is therefore clear that one of the greatest needs in Deaf Education in South Africa at present, is the need for training teachers of the Deaf. The general perception is that it should become a requirement for all new teachers and should be strongly recommended for all existing teachers of the Deaf. It

is only through sufficiently educated teachers that we will be able to create an education system that is equal and just and accessible to all Deaf people in South Africa.

In an effort to ascertain why the educational system appears to be so ineffectual, the researcher interviewed both teachers of the Deaf as well as Deaf adults themselves on Deaf education from their perspectives. The purpose of this paper however was to conduct an inquiry into the emic views of Deaf adults who had experienced Deaf Education in South Africa first hand. For this study in-depth, open-ended interviews were used to learn about the experiences of Deaf adults on their education. The raw data gained from this in-depth study were rigorously and methodically studied and analysed, with the aim of gaining understanding on how to improve Deaf education in South Africa. These personal views obtained in a 'bottom-up' research mode would also be essential in contributing to the sparse body of knowledge on Deaf education in South Africa from the Deaf Adults perspective, and therefore be crucial in both Deaf Education in general as well as in the Deaf community's move toward empowerment and equality.

Method

Design and Methodology. A qualitative research design was selected for this study as the research problem of this inquiry embraced an in-depth study of Deaf adults' experiences of a certain event. Qualitative research has been defined by Kirk and Miller (1986, quoted in Krefting, 1991:214) as a "particular tradition in social science that fundamentally depends on watching people in their own territory and interacting with them in their own language, on their own term", and has as its aim "to give an honest account with little or no interpretation of...those spoken words or of the observations made by the researcher" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990:221).

Miles and Huberman (1994:1) describe qualitative data as sources "of well grounded, rich descriptions and explanations of processes in identifiable local contexts". The data in this study were collected by means of in-depth, open-ended interviews and took the form of a multisite: constant comparative study (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992), as they consisted of the same questions and probes to all the respondents. The interview questions focused specifically on Deaf adults' experiences of their school careers and are thus in-depth interviews, but more specifically phenomenological interviews (Kvale, 1983; Polio & Polio, 1991).

Deaf participants. Deaf adults in this study were viewed as participants and informants (Spradley, 1979 in Foster, 1989a) rather than subjects. Accordingly Deaf adults were seen as both "source of information" and "teacher" for the researcher, as it was their emic views which led the researcher and shaped the study. The investigator was interested in how Deaf adults experienced their education, thus the in-depth interviews were based on recollections of past experiences as well as their present experiences and feelings on their education.

This study focused on 23 adult Deaf South Africans (ranging in age from 17 to 56) who had experienced Deaf Education in South Africa. Three sample groups were selected (see Le Compte and Preissle, 1993)on both logistical (geographically convenient to contact on the day selected for doing the interviews) and conceptu. criteria (adult members of the South Africa Deaf population having experienced Deaf education in AS). The Deaf adult population is a naturally bounded group due to both linguistic and cultural factors. The study included both South Africans who had left South Africa, as well as those who had stayed in this country despite its educational inadequacies.

Three sample groups were interviewed. The first group consisted of 10 Deaf Adults who were now living in the United States. They were selected due to their being part of the sub-culture of South African Deaf people living in the Washington, DC vicinity, and because they were conveniently available for the interviews. This group of Deaf adults included 5 women and 5 men (representing 3 provinces as well as various cultures and language groups). The research took place at the South African Freedom Day picnic in Virginia for all South Africans in the DC area. All of the participants from this group were from the Washington DC area and were either in school, university or were employed in regular jobs.

In each of the interviews the subjects gave a brief background of themselves and were then asked why they had moved to the United States, and what would motivate them to go back to South Africa. These interviews were conducted in a mixture of South African Sign Language and American Sign Language (ASL), and an ASL interpreter was used to transcribe the interviews.

The second and third groups of Deaf South Africans interviewed were those who had stayed in South Africa despite the discrimination and political turmoil (one group based in Johannesburg and one in the Cape). The 13 subjects interviewed in these groups consisted of 8 men and 5 women (representing 4 provinces as well as various languages and cultures of South Africa). These groups participated in phenomenological interviews where they were asked to talk about their experiences on growing up and being educated in the South African Deaf education system.

In view of the fact that the interviews were administered in Sign Language, which is a visual-gestural language, it was imperative that video recordings were made of the interviews. Such technology "allows researchers to capture the nature of the physical setting, the identity of participants in interactions, and many aspects of non-verbal communication...." (Johnson, 1992:86, quoted in Esterhuizen, 1994). Each of the video recorded interviews were transcribed from Sign Language into English by an active South African Sign Language interpreter (and an ASL interpreter where necessary). Transcriptions were triangulated by both an American Sign Language interpreter and a second South African Sign language interpreter.

Analysis

Analysis of qualitative research entails the integration of the information collected, and finally the interpretation of the data and the conclusions. The qualitative researcher does not usually formulate hypotheses, but allows "theories to generate

from the grounded theory inductively" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990:24). Miles and Huberman (1994) describe the analysis process as consisting of "three concurrent flows of activity: data reduction, data display, and the drawing of verifications and conclusions" (Bryman & Burgess, 1994:216). The data analysis will now be clarified in terms of the three phases identified.

This initial process of reduction refers to "focusing, simplifying, abstracting and transforming the data" that appear in the transcriptions (Miles and Huberman, 1994:10). The data condensation process took place through clustering, conceptualisation and dendogramming (Krippendorf, 1980 as cited in Miles and Huberman, 1994). All the data from the interviews were analysed by means of three-columned figures known as dendograms (see figure 1). This method of clustering is conducted with the aim of seeing which content can be clustered without losing coherence or interfering with pragmatic meaning, as well as to determine which to group together and which to leave separate (leCompte & Goetz, 1983 as cited in Miles and Huberman, 1994). The elements clustered were left in chronological order in order to reduce the possibility of isolated items being enumerated out of context.

These clustered codes or units were then extended into concepts, which form the building blocks of theory (Bryman & Burgess, 1994). The development of conceptual categories takes place whilst coding these units into components and involves looking for recurring or correlating units and themes (Merriam, 1988; Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Formulating categories requires both convergent and divergent thinking. Convergence refers to the gathering of information and identifying units (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, in Merriam, 1988:132) which will form the basis of categories. Once categories have been established they are fleshed out by means of divergence. The constructed categories need to be internally homogenous, but should also be heterogeneous: thus a single category needs to include similar data, and the differences between categories are required to be clear (Merriam, 1988). Through these qualitative analysis proceedings various categories were identified and then organized thematically.

In this report, data displays are utilized in order to "assemble organized information into an immediately accessible, compact form" to show what is happening during the process of data analysis. (Miles & Huberman, 1994:11). Miles & Huberman have transposed a well known dictum to "You know what you display", and in this study the researcher attempts to realize this. Furthermore the credibility and accuracy of this study were ensured by verifying the findings on the validation model of Miles and Huberman (1994).

Results

The results of analysis of the data are presented in this section, and will be discussed in two sections. The first section will concentrate on the Deaf adults who have remained in South Africa and the second section on the South African Deaf adults living the USA. In both the groups interviewed various categories were identified, however the most fundamental categories were those of Teachers, Education levels and Sign Language. Throughout the interviews the majority of the informants' responses and reflections were steeped in what appeared to be unresolved emotions.

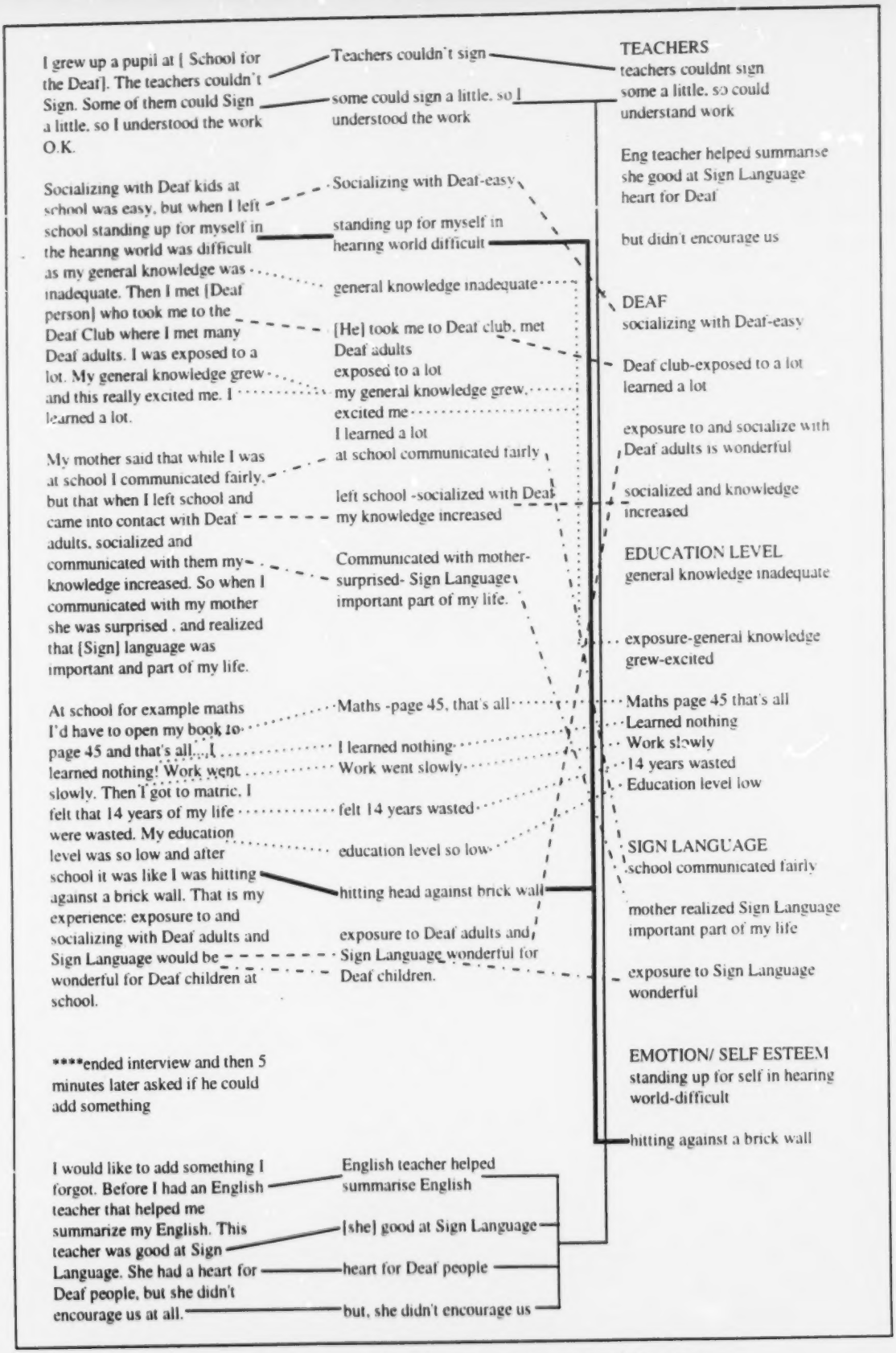
I grew up a pupil at [School for the Deaf]. The teachers couldn't Sign. Some of them could Sign a little. so I understood the work O.K.
Teachers couldn't sign
some could sign a little. so I understood the work
TEACHERS
teachers couldnt sign
some a little. so could understand work
Eng teacher helped summarise she good at Sign Language heart for Deaf
but didn't encourage us
Socializing with Deaf kids at school was easy, but when I left school standing up for myself in the hearing world was difficult as my general knowledge was inadequate. Then I met [Deaf person] who took me to the Deaf Club where I met many Deaf adults. I was exposed to a lot. My general knowledge grew and this really excited me. I learned a lot.
Socializing with Deaf-easy
standing up for myself in hearing world difficult
general knowledge inadequate
[He] took me to Deaf club. met Deaf adults
exposed to a lot
my general knowledge grew.
excited me
I learned a lot
DEAF
socializing with Deaf-easy
Deaf club-exposed to a lot
learned a lot
My mother said that while I was at school I communicated fairly, but that when I left school and came into contact with Deaf adults, socialized and communicated with them my knowledge increased. So when I communicated with my mother she was surprised , and realized that [Sign] language was important and part of my life.
at school communicated fairly
left school -socialized with Deaf
my knowledge increased
Communicated with mother-surprised- Sign Language important part of my life.
exposure to and socialize with Deaf adults is wonderful
socialized and knowledge increased
EDUCATION LEVEL
general knowledge inadequate
exposure-general knowledge grew-excited
At school for example maths I'd have to open my book to page 45 and that's all... I learned nothing! Work went slowly. Then I got to matric. I felt that 14 years of my life were wasted. My education level was so low and after school it was like I was hitting against a brick wall. That is my experience: exposure to and socializing with Deaf adults and Sign Language would be wonderful for Deaf children at school.
Maths -page 45, that's all
I learned nothing
Work went slowly
felt 14 years wasted
education level so low
hitting head against brick wall
exposure to Deaf adults and Sign Language wonderful for Deaf children.
Maths page 45 that's all
Learned nothing
Work slowly
14 years wasted
Education level low
SIGN LANGUAGE
school communicated fairly
mother realized Sign Language important part of my life
exposure to Sign Language wonderful
****ended interview and then 5 minutes later asked if he could add something
EMOTION/ SELF ESTEEM
standing up for self in hearing world-difficult
hitting against a brick wall
I would like to add something I forgot. Before I had an English teacher that helped me summarize my English. This teacher was good at Sign Language. She had a heart for Deaf people, but she didn't encourage us at all.
English teacher helped summarise English
[she] good at Sign Language
heart for Deaf people
but, she didn't encourage us

Figure 1: Example of the processing of data in a three phase dendogram.

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Deaf adults living in South Africa

Informants recalled various experiences with teachers during their school career. Communication was identified as the core and often appeared to be a problem between the teachers and the pupils as the following example reveals:

> The teachers spoke and lip-reading was done. I could do this well, but the others battled. During my school career I collected all the information and all the other kids would tap me on the shoulder and ask me what the teacher meant. I would tell them to wait, the teacher would speak and then I would tell them in Sign Language what was said. Or in the evenings when we went to the hostels to study, many of the Deaf would ask me questions on what they were reading etc...and that's how they would understand. When the teacher then explained what they were reading then they could understand.

These communication problems often led to despondence and hopelessness as the following story illustrates:

> The teachers would speak orally to me. And I didn't understand.....How was I supposed to learn? I didn't understand a thing.....I used to cry and tell my mom that I didn't understand what the teachers were saying. I told her that I didn't understand, my mom knew that this was a problem. So, we went to speak to the teachers to tell them that I couldn't understand, so I would go to the teacher and tell them I didn't understand and they would explain again orally. Then I would just sit there, and put my hand up again and say I don't understand. And then they started screaming and asking me why I didn't understand ... then I would just keep quiet.

In addition to communication problems in the class, various participants also recalled occasions when due to communicating in Sign Language, they would be punished and insulted (see also Widell, 1994):

> They would say that if we sign we looked like monkeys and we were not monkeys and we would be punished and hit and smacked on our hands. We had to talk, but you know for me it was so difficult to understand them speaking...lip-reading, what are you saying?? Trying to understand what they were saying to me was impossible, so I would sign and then get caught. The teacher would call me, punish me and make me stand in the corner facing the wall sometimes for up to an hour at a time. I would be punished and then I could go back. But this was terrible and it carried on like this.

Memories such as these surfaced in many interviews as well as recollections of anger and utter fear. One Deaf participant remembered how such punishment would make the "anger really buil(t)d up within" him, but that they would just keep it in. Another informant only had recollections of being "so scared of the teachers" that he was afraid to participate within the class or even ask questions. This fear of participation goes hand in hand with a description by another deaf adult of her self-esteem dropping due to her oral education background and constant criticism from teachers: "I learned

that because I was deaf I am stupid. They kept criticizing me and telling me what to do. My self-esteem totally dropped."

In addition to these emotive results of communication problems, Deaf adults also blamed lack of communication for low and inadequate general knowledge, which in turn according to one deaf adult adversely effected their "standing up" for themselves in the hearing world. On returning from studying in America, this Deaf adult had the following to say: "They asked me many questions, general knowledge type questions on South Africa.....Well, I couldn't answer...Then they asked American questions I could answer them all. Why, because they had teachers that could sign, interpreters, captioning on TV....South Africa has nothing".

This criticism of the South African education system is echoed more strongly in the following statements:

> *Informant A:* I learned nothing! Work went slowly. Then I got to matric, I felt that 14 years of my life were wasted. My education level was so low and after school it was like I was hitting against a brick wall.
>
> *Informant B:* I know that educational levels have always been, well from my years at school, unlike the levels at other schools. For me this was very frustrating, because I wanted to learn more.
>
> *Informant L:* When I left school I wanted to become a teacher, but I couldn't even read. I didn't understand thing.

In this discussion of levels of Deaf education, teachers could once again not avoid playing a central role. It was said that Deaf levels dropped because the teachers taught orally, causing "the information just (to fly) past them (Deaf pupils)".

In summary, the majority of informants found their education inadequate, and frequently complained about the quality of education they received at the schools for the Deaf. Teachers inadvertently became part of each category and discussion, as they are integrally part of every aspect of the education process. The importance of Sign Language as language in the classroom was emphasized time and time again by most of the participants, and due to the lack thereof much of the education was experienced as unacceptable.

Deaf Adults living in the USA

Informants described a variety of issues relating to Deaf education in South Africa. The central categories identified were Services for the Deaf, Opportunities and Sign Language in education. All the respondents were critical of the Deaf education system, and had specific reasons for leaving South Africa.. The majority of respondents had gone to America for educational reasons, but in spite of their apparent willingness to return to South Africa many of them seemed to be enjoying the general ease of living as Deaf people within America "I feel like America offers many services for the Deaf: interpreting, relay services....everything, activities and many events".

Eight of the ten informants in this group moved to America for educational reasons. Some examples of the reasons given for leaving South Africa:

> *Informant C*: I moved to America because there were better opportunities. good education, good schools and at least I have a future here.
>
> *Informant D*. I left South Africa to come to a university for the Deaf. I wanted to graduate.
>
> *Informant E*: Why did I move to America. I moved to America because I wanted to advance in education after high school.

Initially the majority of the informants moved to the USA temporarily, in order to gain further educational qualifications. On reflecting back two of the respondents described their ambitions of wanting to return home after their studies, and how these ambitions were blocked:

> *Informant F*: I graduated in 1982. I went back to South Africa to see if I could find a job, but in South Africa they didn't want to accept my American degree....so that was a problem. So, I came back to America to pursue my job here at Gallaudet. Then in 1990 I went back to South Africa to see if there were any opportunities for me, but there was none. And then in 1993 I returned again to see what chances there are for me, but there was nothing, so my wife and I decided to stay here and wait and see if America will be our home??
>
> *Informant E*: I went back home to South Africa because I wanted to try and make it my full-time home. I had finished my degree at Gallaudet and I went home, but I couldn't find a job, there were no job opportunities for me. I wanted to become a teacher, but schools would not accept Deaf teachers of the Deaf, and that was really disappointing. So, I came back and I studied my MA at university. So, I went home for the second time after my MA and still they would not accept a Deaf teacher. Couldn't find a job, there were no interpreters for me.....so I decided to stay here in America. Then recently after the elections, I was experienced, had a good job here, I went back home to South Africa again. I sent out my resume....to all the schools for the Deaf. It is a good CV, I have good qualifications, good experience...and I have heard nothing.

Such experiences of disillusionment and disappointment still appear to be foreign to the younger Deaf generation studying abroad. Their dream is still to return to South Africa and "to become a teacher of the Deaf in South Africa" and to "support and encourage...so that Deaf people can develop and get educated". It is hoped that these young adults get the opportunity to return to South Africa and fulfill their dream, unlike some of the older adults interviewed.

Most of the participants showed an interest in returning to South Africa, however they were very clear with what they saw to be prerequisites and necessary changes in Deaf education in South Africa.

Informant C: Well, first I would like to change the schools, there need to be opportunities and no discrimination against deaf people

Informant D: I want South Africa to change to Sign Language....They need to know about Deaf Culture and should not discriminate against us....We need equal opportunities.

Informant E: The things that need to change in South Africa now: we need interpreters, interpreter programs, teacher training programs...but my view, we need...the government needs to establish a special office for special education and services. An office that will focus on Deaf people's needs for all schools for the Deaf that will give them support services once they have left school. At the moment there is none of that. So, many people finish school and then what....they need that type of services, so that office will then focus on that.

Informant F: I would like to see services for the Deaf in South Africa like interpreting services, higher education and support services for Deaf people.

Informant G: I'd maybe go back to South Africa if South Africa is willing to improve services for the Deaf: provide interpreters, relay services, improve the education system, and improve activities for the Deaf to make it more exciting, and improve leadership skills as well.

Informant H: What I would like very much in the world for Deaf schools....is Sign Language number 1 for use in schools and that Sign Language be recognized by hearing people.

Informant I: Most important I think is education.

Informant J: I think what needs to change in South Africa is the attitude towards deafness, awareness, support for education of the Deaf. Education is the most important, not to suppress it. television captioning, equality like in America. Deaf people are equal. Sign Language is accepted, communication is easy and they advance as easily and equally as hearing people do.

Deaf adults experienced the education system as failing them, which becomes evident in the following statement, "I wish South Africa had given me a better education, and better opportunities for the Deaf..." Despite this however, many of the participants still associated themselves very closely with South Africa and the educational problems experienced in the Deaf community by constantly referring to "we" and "us" when talking about the South African situation.

In summary, the majority of the South African Deaf community living in America had educational reasons for leaving. They described these reasons as among others, inadequate support services, insufficient opportunities and teachers that were unaware and insensitive to their special educational and communication needs. This reveals that these Deaf adults were not satisfied with their education and had taken steps to overcome the barriers described.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to rigorously and methodically describe Deaf adults' emic views of their education, to gain both knowledge and insight into the "world as lived and experienced by the deaf person" (Polio & Polio: 441). At the outset of the investigation the design was constructed in such a way that the respondents' emic views would become an important perspective and one in which the "voice" and their "multi-voicedness" would be "heard" (Wertsch, 1991) by the investigator. Consequently the data consisted of rich descriptions of Deaf education in South Africa as seen through the eyes of Deaf adults.

In discussing their experiences at schools for the Deaf, both groups of Deaf adults expressed their disapproval for the Deaf education system in South Africa. The majority of informants found their education inadequate, and frequently complained about the quality of education they received at these schools. Despite the corresponding disapproval of Deaf education levels in general, the two groups interviewed had divergent arguments. The South African group centred mainly on Sign Language and the communication problems in Deaf education, whereas the Deaf adults living in America predominantly referred to the lack of services for the Deaf in South Africa as the biggest problem.

The South African Deaf adults interviewed, identified Sign Language as the cardinal issue in Deaf education today. "Sign Language has a really big influence on education. on public services...a vast range of things". Most of the informants complained about the teachers' lack of Sign Language use, as well as their being prohibited to sign amongst each other in the class. The majority of the South African Deaf community living in America had educational reasons for leaving South Africa, however during the interviews they focused on opportunities for the Deaf and services such as interpreter services, relay services, television captioning and support services for Deaf people, as the biggest dilemma for the Deaf in South Africa.

Both groups of Deaf respondents' clear and strong criticism of the present education system and environment for deaf people in South Africa made it apparent that the present system was unacceptable to the Deaf community represented in the study. Deaf adults frequently felt unprepared for the hearing world which became evident in their references to their lack of general knowledge and poor educational levels at schools for the Deaf and inability to read when leaving school. This correlates with Erting's (1994:20) comment that "schools have not equipped deaf individuals to compete with their normally hearing peers".

These poor educational levels expose Deaf people to limited educational backgrounds. which, according to Altshuler, Deming, Vollenweider, Rainer & Tendler, 1976 (in Marschark, 1993:21) along with other factors, are likely to lead to an environment conducive to a lack of self-esteem. This is reflected in the following statements: "standing up for myself in the hearing world was difficult as my general knowledge was inadequate", When I left school....I couldn't even read" and "I feel very angry about my education.....My self-esteem totally dropped". In contrast to this limited education experienced in South Africa conducive to a lack of self-esteem, Svartholm

(1994:70) describes the bilingual model (as practiced in Sweden) as resulting in "a group of confident, literate young people".

As South Africa is presently at a cross-roads in education, it is essential that Deaf education be prepared for the changes that lie ahead. "In order to improve the education system for deaf children, we must first re-educate the teachers and reduce the prejudice that leads to oppression" (Okombo, 1994:42). However, due to the fact that teachers of the Deaf in South Africa do not have specialised teacher training in order to prepare them for the task of teaching the Deaf, Deaf education has suffered immensely and has been discriminatory.

This discriminatory education system (controlled by hearing people in South Africa) is clearly illustrated in the following emotive statement made by a Deaf adult presently living in America: "we've suffered too much oppression. But other parties don't want the Deaf to achieve, they want the Deaf to stay down, for the hearing to remain dominant....they must be in control all the time" (see Jankowski, 1995 for further reading on oppression in Deaf communities).

In order to amend what is clearly an unsatisfactory situation in Deaf education, it is generally believed that teachers of the Deaf in South Africa need specialised training and preparation in order to teach Deaf children. A complete course emersed in Deaf Culture, Sign Language and the linguistics of Sign Language will sufficiently prepare teachers for the great task ahead of them. Paul & Quigley (1990:5) describe such a preparation programme as "a complex and difficult process because it requires imparting to the future teachers knowledge and skills from many disciplinary and practical areas". Furthermore, such a preparation programme is to "promote communication, language, **socioemotional**, educational, and vocational development. the future teacher needs to know much about each as it is related to **hearing** students as well as hearing impaired students (Paul and Quigley, 1990:5).

It is only through an intense understanding of the Deaf child: their culture, their language and development (McAnally, P.L., Rose, S.& Quigley, S.P. 1994), that teachers will be able to reach them and be able to cultivate literate, educated Deaf children. The researcher proposes that through an in-depth teacher preparation program, based on high standards such as set by the CED (Council on Education of the Deaf), this can be achieved (Christensen, K.M. & Delgado, G.L 1993:181). It is further proposed that Deaf adults be used and viewed as "partners to educational planners and practitioners, and encouraged to become architects of their own lives through participation in the design, implementation and evaluation of the programmes and services they use" (Foster, 1989b:80) as it is the "deaf themselves who are proper experts in knowing what it is like to be deaf and what it is like to communicate without access to spoken language", and therefore "their opinion should be the guiding principle for any proposals about their education" (Svartholm, 1994: personal correspondence).

Throughout the study Deaf adults from both groups' responses were laden with emotion and what appeared to be unresolved issues. The researcher suggests that the time has finally come for the South African education system to take heed to what is

being said by the Deaf themselves. By disallowing the Deaf community an education in their own language by means of teachers who have specialised teacher training, we are discriminating against a large portion of our population (1.6 million) due to their disability. This situation becomes more serious when considering that the UN and UNESCO have approved and accepted Sign Language as the first language of the Deaf. Further support of this is found in the following statement in our constitution:

> "No person shall be unfairly discriminated against, directly or indirectly, and, without derogating from the generality of this provision, on one or more of the following grounds in particular: race, gender, sex, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, **disability**, religion, conscience, belief, culture or language"

In addition to this, in South Africa equality, accessibility, freedom from discrimination (specifically discrimination based on disability), development and human rights are also strongly echoed in the following documents: The Interim and Final Constitution, 1993 and 1996; The National Disability Strategy Draft White Paper on Education and Training, 1994; Statement by the South African Federal Council on Disability (SAFCD),1995; Disability Children's Action Group (DICAG), 1996.

If these high standards are not upheld in Deaf education, the researcher is concerned that more and more Deaf adults will leave South Africa for greener pastures (as did the 10 South African informants living in the USA). The challenge exposed by this study therefore, needs to be faced by both educators and policy makers in Deaf education: Deaf education levels needs to improve, Sign Language needs to become the mode of communication, teachers of the Deaf need to be trained and services (such as interpreters, relay services) for the deaf need to be implemented. Due to the small sample of Deaf adults interviewed (23) the study is limited, and for this reason further research is encouraged in order to support, expand and reflect on these findings.

Finally, the significance of this study for deaf education in South Africa is evident in the clear and direct data that has been collected. The need for quality Deaf education in South Africa is highlighted through the "voices" of the Deaf participants themselves. Further exploratory research in this area is encouraged and the researcher would speculate that Deaf education in general, and more specifically Teacher training programs, could benefit from studies in which all shareholders are given the opportunity to be 'heard'. A further goal of the study was to elicit researched discussion and dialogue in a field so filled with arguments and unfounded disputes.

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Addendum

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